DISCOVERING BUDDHISM: *HOSTED BY MAITRIPA COLLEGE*

TRANSFORMING PROBLEMS WITH VEN. YÖNTEN

Exploring Thought Transformation

བློ་སྦྱོང Lo-jong

Mind Training / Thought Transformation

Technique for radical reframing and transformation of suffering

Though the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, referenced techniques of this type during his lifetime, they became prominent and popularized through the Nalanda Tradition of India and especially emphasized by the Tibetan Buddhist Traditions through Lama Atisha, Geshe Chekawa, Geshe Langri Tangpa and other great masters to this very day.

བློ་སྦྱོང Lo-jong

Mind Training / Thought Transformation

Technique for radical reframing and transformation of suffering

An example found in a common practice. In verse form:

Lama Chöpa (Guru Puja), Verse 96:

Even if the environment and beings are filled with the fruits of negativity,
And unwished for sufferings pour down like rain,
I seek your blessings to take these miserable conditions as a path
By seeing them as causes to exhaust the results of my negative karma.

བློ་སྦྱོང *Lo-jong*: Thought Transformation / Mind Training

Emphasizes

གཏོང་ལེན *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice

This is the actual practice, done in connection with the visualization of giving and taking. It was explained by Nāgārjuna in Ratnavali thus:

"May their negative fruits ripen upon me,
And my positive fruits upon them."

From: HH Dalai Lama. The Union Of Bliss And Emptiness: Teachings On The Practice Of Guru Yoga (Locations 1659-1660).

Nāgārjuna (approx. 150 – 250 C.E.) was an Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist Nalanda Master who is widely considered one of the most important Buddhist philosophers. His text, Precious Garland, contains one of the earliest descriptions of *Tong-Len* and he is also credited with founding the Middle Way Tenet School.

བློ་སྦྱོང *Lo-jong:* Thought Transformation / Mind Training

Emphasizes

གཏོང་ལེན *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice

which develops

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

BODHICHITTA (Skt.; Tib. *jangchub kyi sem*) The Mind [a.k.a. Spirit or Heart] of Enlightenment: the altruistic mind that seeks enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings.

From: Tsering, Geshe Tashi. Tantra: The Foundation of Buddhist Thought, Volume 6 (pp. 197-198). Wisdom Publications.

The Two Bodhichittas described in *Lo-jong*: **Conventional and Ultimate**
(see also aspiring and engaging) – related to the two aspects of reality and how to practice in response to each. *Lo-Jong* practice describes both, which comes first will vary by author.

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-jong*: Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

གཏོང་ལེན་ *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice *which develops*

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

Which is of two types: Conventional and Ultimate

Conventional/ Relative Bodhichitta

The main, Mahayana motivation: the altruistic mind that seeks enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings – fully qualified, it is an uncontrived, spontaneous, main mind/primary consciousness. It is achieved upon realizing the Mahayana Path of accumulation (which also requires the realization of the determination to be free/definite emergence/renunciation). The goal of enlightenment involves the need for omniscience/for all cognitive obscurations to be removed, in order to know how to best benefit others and aid their enlightenment.

L. Yönten from the oral *Lam Rim* teaching of Khensur Rinpoche, Geshe Tashi Tsering 2006. Chenrezig Institute.

There are two types: aspiring bodhichitta, the mind that aspires to attain enlightenment, and engaging bodhichitta, the mind that actually engages in the bodhisattva's activities, such as the six perfections.

Tsering, Geshe Tashi. Tantra: The Foundation of Buddhist Thought, Volume 6 (pp. 197-198). Wisdom Publications.

ཐེག་ Lo-jong: Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

ཁྲིད་ལེན་ *Tong-Len:* Giving and Taking Practice *which develops*

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

Which is of two types: Conventional and Ultimate

Ultimate/Absolute Bodhichitta

…the perfection of wisdom, known in Sanskrit as *prajnaparamita*, is a direct, unmediated realization of emptiness that is also called "ultimate bodhichitta." This is not the direct realization of emptiness alone; rather it is this direct realization in union with bodhichitta—the aspiration to become a buddha in order to free all beings. This union of wisdom and method constitutes the first *bhumi*, or level of bodhisattva attainment.

Jinpa Ph.D., Geshe Thupten. Essence of the Heart Sutra: The Dalai Lama's Heart of Wisdom Teachings (p. 87). Wisdom Publications.

In other words, Utilmate Bodhichitta is bodhichitta in the mind of a bodhisattva who has realized emptiness directly/perceptually (achieved the Mahayana Path of Seeing).

L. Yönten from the oral *Lam Rim* teaching of Khensur Rinpoche, Geshe Tashi Tsering 2006. Chenrezig Institute.

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-jong*: Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

གཏོང་ལེན་ *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice *which develops*

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

Which is of two types: Conventional and Ultimate

Conventional/ Relative Bodhichitta

The magnificent qualities of conventional bodhicitta [are described] in terms of equalizing and exchanging self and others. That bodhisattvas cherish others to such an extent that they can give away their body — not to mention their possessions — is an amazing quality to be honored. In terms of the method aspect of the path, there is nothing more magnificent than bodhicitta.

Lama, Dalai; Chodron, Thubten. In Praise of Great Compassion (TLWC Book 5) (p. 169). Wisdom Publications.

Ultimate/Absolute Bodhichitta

A bodhisattva with the correct view avoids the two extremes of absolutism and nihilism and is able to live according to the law of karma and its effects while at the same time understand that all phenomena are empty of true existence. In terms of the wisdom aspect of the path, there is nothing more marvelous than ultimate bodhicitta.

Lama, Dalai; Chodron, Thubten. In Praise of Great Compassion (TLWC Book 5) (p. 170). Wisdom Publications.

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-Jong*: Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

གཏོང་ལེན་ *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice *which develops*

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

Cultivating Conventional Bodhichitta technique

Key Components in *Lo-Jong* teachings:

1. Equalize Self and Others
2. Identify the Disadvantages of Self-Cherishing
3. Identify the Advantages of Cherishing Others
4. Decide to Actually Exchange Self for Others
5. *Tong-Len* in Practice

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-Jong*: Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

གཏོང་ལེན་ *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice ***which develops***

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས་ *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

Cultivating Conventional Bodhichitta technique

Key Components in *Lo-Jong* teachings:

1. Equalize Self and Others
   - Look at one's percentage of emphasis of self over others as opposed to how many more others there are than self…and what that does…
   - Motivation of self and others is equal/same: we all want happiness and don't want suffering (causes of each are confused)…develop affinity…
2. Identify the Disadvantages of Self-Cherishing
3. Identify the Advantages of Cherishing Others
4. Decide to Actually Exchange Self for Others
5. *Tong-Len* in Practice

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-Jong*: Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

གཏོང་ལེན་ *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice ***which develops***

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས་ *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

Cultivating Conventional Bodhichitta technique

Key Components in *Lo-Jong* teachings:

1. Equalize Self and Others
2. Identify the Disadvantages of Self-Cherishing - use logic & experience -
   - For Oneself (In the Present and Historically):
     - How does it feel to give to and receive it from others?
   - For Others (In the Present and Historically):
     - How do others seem to feel and respond when it is directed it at them?
3. Identify the Advantages of Cherishing Others
4. Decide to Actually Exchange Self for Others
5. *Tong-Len* in Practice

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-Jong*: Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

གཏོང་ལེན་ *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice *which develops*

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས་ *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

Cultivating Conventional Bodhichitta technique

Key Components in *Lo-Jong* teachings:

1. Equalize Self and Others
2. Identify the Disadvantages of Self-Cherishing
3. Identify the Advantages of Cherishing Others
   - For Oneself (In the Present and Historically):
     - How does it feel to give to and receive it from others
   - For Others (In the Present and Historically):
     - How do others seem to feel and respond when it is directed it at them?
4. Decide to Actually Exchange Self for Others
5. *Tong-Len* in Practice

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-Jong*: Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

གཏོང་ལེན་ *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice ***which develops***

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས་ *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

Cultivating Conventional Bodhichitta technique

Key Components in *Lo-Jong* teachings:

1. Equalize Self and Others
2. Identify the Disadvantages of Self-Cherishing
3. Identify the Advantages of Cherishing Others
4. Decide to Actually Exchange Self for Others
   - Be with the sense of choosing this practice for the benefit of yourself, others and progress on the path.
   - Let your choice resonate and sink in.
5. *Tong-Len* in Practice

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-Jong*: Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

གཏོང་ལེན་ *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice ***which develops***

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས་ *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

Cultivating Conventional Bodhichitta technique

Key Components in *Lo-Jong* teachings:

1. Equalize Self and Others
2. Identify the Disadvantages of Self-Cherishing
3. Identify the Advantages of Cherishing Others
4. Decide to Actually Exchange Self for Others
5. *Tong-Len* in Practice
   - Connect with "giving" on the out breath - visualize golden light
     - With loving kindness, offer your past, present and future happiness
   - Connect with "taking" on the in breath - visualize black smoke
     - With compassion, take the past, present and future suffering

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-Jong*: Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

གཏོང་ལེན *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice *which develops*

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

Cultivating Conventional Bodhichitta technique

Tong-Len in Practice

- Connect with "giving" on the out breath
  - visualize golden light
  - With loving kindness, offer your past, present and future happiness
- Connect with "taking" on the in breath
  - visualize black smoke
  - With compassion, take the past, present and future suffering

"Tong-Len" As described in a common practice. Verse form:

Lama Chöpa (Guru Puja), Verse 96:

And thus, perfect, pure, compassionate Guru,
I seek your blessings that all negativities, obscurations
and sufferings of mother migrators
May without exception ripen upon me right now,
And that by giving my happiness and virtue to others
All migrators may experience happiness.

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-Jong*: Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

གཏོང་ལེན *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice ***which develops***

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

Cultivating Conventional Bodhichitta technique

Tong-Len in Practice within Geshe Langri Tangpa's 8 Verses of Thought Transformation:

- Connect with "giving" on the out breath
  - visualize golden light
  - With loving kindness, offer your past, present and future happiness
- Connect with "taking" on the in breath
  - visualize black smoke
  - With compassion, take the past, present and future suffering

7. In short, both directly and indirectly, do I offer every happiness and benefit to all my mothers. I shall secretly take upon myself all their harmful actions & suffering.

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-Jong*: Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

གཏོང་ལེན *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice ***which develops***

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

Cultivating Conventional Bodhichitta technique

Tong-Len in Practice within Geshe Chekawa's 7 Point Mind Training:

- Connect with "giving" on the out breath
  - visualize golden light
    - With loving kindness, offer your past, present and future happiness
- Connect with "taking" on the in breath
  - visualize black smoke
    - With compassion, take the past, present and future suffering

2. The Main Practice; Training in Bodhichitta

Relative Bodhichitta:

- Sending and taking should be practiced alternately; you should begin by taking from yourself; these two should ride the breath.

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-Jong:* Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

ཏོང་ལེན་ *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice *which develops*

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས་ *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

Impetus for *Tong-Len* in Practice within Dharmarakshita's Wheel of Sharp Weapons:

Cultivating Conventional Bodhichitta technique

- Connect with "giving" on the out breath
  - visualize golden light
    - With loving kindness, offer your past, present and future happiness
- Connect with "taking" on the in breath
  - visualize black smoke
    - With compassion, take the past, present and future suffering

(6) And thus bodhisattvas are likened to peacocks: they live on delusions – those poisonous plants. Transforming them into the essence of practice, they thrive in the jungle of everyday life. Whatever is presented, they always accept, while destroying the poison of clinging desire.

(7) Uncontrollable wandering through rounds of existence is caused by our grasping at egos as real. This ignorant attitude heralds the demon of selfish concern for our welfare alone: we seek some security for our own egos; we want only pleasure and shun any pain. But now, we must banish all selfish compulsion and gladly take hardship for all others' sake.

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-Jong*: Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

ཏོང་ལེན་ *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice *which develops*

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས་ *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

Directive to *Tong-Len* in Practice within Dharmarakshita's Wheel of Sharp Weapons:

Cultivating Conventional Bodhichitta technique

- Connect with "giving" on the out breath
  - visualize golden light
    - With loving kindness, offer your past, present and future happiness
- Connect with "taking" on the in breath
  - visualize black smoke
    - With compassion, take the past, present and future suffering

(8) All of our sufferings derive from our habits of selfish delusions we heed and act out. As all of us share in this tragic misfortune, which stems from our narrow and self-centered ways, we must take all our sufferings and the miseries of others and smother our wishes of selfish concern.

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-Jong:* Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

ཐོང་ལེན་ *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice *which develops*

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས་ *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

Suffering of Body & Mind *Tong-Len* within Dharmarakshita's Wheel of Sharp Weapons:

Cultivating Conventional Bodhichitta technique

- Connect with "giving" on the out breath
  - visualize golden light
    - With loving kindness, offer your past, present and future happiness
- Connect with "taking" on the in breath
  - visualize black smoke
    - With compassion, take the past, present and future suffering

(10) When our bodies are aching and racked with great torment of dreadful diseases we cannot endure, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have injured the bodies of others; hereafter let's take on what sickness is theirs.

(11) Depressed and forlorn, when we feel mental anguish, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have deeply disturbed minds of others; hereafter let's take on this suffering ourselves.

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-Jong*: Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

གཏོང་ལེན *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice ***which develops***

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta through overcoming [negative] self-cherishing

Harsh & Critical Words *Tong-Len* within Dharmarakshita's Wheel of Sharp Weapons:

Cultivating Conventional Bodhichitta technique

- Connect with "giving" on the out breath
  - visualize golden light
    - With loving kindness, offer your past, present and future happiness
- Connect with "taking" on the in breath
  - visualize black smoke
    - With compassion, take the past, present and future suffering

(14) When we hear only language that is foul and abusive, this is the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. Till now we have said many things without thinking; we have slandered and caused many friendships to end. Hereafter let's censure all thoughtless remarks.

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-Jong:* Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

ཐོང་ལེན་ *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice *which develops*

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས་ *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta through overcoming [negative] self-cherishing

Summary of *Tong-Len* within Dharmarakshita's Wheel of Sharp Weapons:

Cultivating Conventional Bodhichitta technique

- Connect with "giving" on the out breath
  - visualize golden light
    - With loving kindness, offer your past, present and future happiness
- Connect with "taking" on the in breath
  - visualize black smoke
    - With compassion, take the past, present and future suffering

(46) In short then, whenever unfortunate sufferings we haven't desired crash upon us like thunder, this is the same as the smith who had taken his life with a sword he had fashioned himself. Our suffering's the wheel of sharp weapons returning full circle upon us from wrongs we have done. *[12]* Hereafter let's always have care and awareness never to act in non-virtuous ways.

[12] It is never possible for us to experience the consequences of the nonvirtuous actions of others. Whatever suffering we have must be the result of nonvirtuous actions we ourselves have committed in the past.

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-Jong*: Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

གཏོང་ལེན *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice ***which develops***

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta through overcoming [negative] self-cherishing

Dedication "giving" side of *Tong-Len* Shantideva's Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life: Chapter 10: Dedication

Cultivating Conventional Bodhichitta technique

- Connect with "giving" on the out breath
  - visualize golden light
  - With loving kindness, offer your past, present and future happiness
- Connect with "taking" on the in breath
  - visualize black smoke
  - With compassion, take the past, present and future suffering

2

May all beings everywhere
Plagued with sufferings of body and mind
Obtain an ocean of happiness and joy
By virtue of my merits.

བློ་སྦྱོང་ *Lo-Jong*: Thought Transformation / Mind Training *Emphasizes*

ཐུགས་ལེན་ *Tong-Len*: Giving and Taking Practice *which develops*

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས་ *Jang-Chub-Kyi-Sem* / Bodhichitta

Resources

Guide to a Bodhisattvas Way of Life:
https://www.tibethouse.jp/about/buddhism/text/pdfs/Bodhisattvas_way_English.pdf

The Eight Verses of Thought Transformation:
https://www.lamayeshe.com/article/eight-verses-thought-transformation

The Wheel of Sharp Weapons:
https://studybuddhism.com/en/tibetan-buddhism/original-texts/sutra-texts/wheel-of-sharp-weapons/wheel-of-sharp-weapons-poetic-rendering

7 Point Mind Training:
https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/geshe-chekhawa-yeshe-dorje/seven-points-mind-training